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General Assembly
Fifty-second Session

Official Records

82nd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 31 March 1998, 4 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Abu-Nimah (Jordan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 5 p.m.

Agenda item 120 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/52/785/Add.2)

The Acting President: In a letter contained in document A/52/785/Add.2, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications dated 4 February and 23 March 1998, Djibouti and Sierra Leone have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

Adoption of the agenda of the fifty-second regular session of the General Assembly and organization of work: request for the reopening of the consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 97 (Renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership) submitted by the President of the General Assembly

Letter dated 20 March 1998 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chairman of the Second Committee (A/52/836)

The Acting President: In a letter dated 20 March 1998 from the President of the Assembly (A/52/836), the President informs Member States that it is his intention to bring to the attention of the General Assembly, at a forthcoming date, a letter from the Chairman of the Second Committee concerning sub-item (a) of agenda item 97, entitled "Renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership" (A/52/832), in order that the Assembly may take note of the letter from the Chairman of the Second Committee.

To enable the General Assembly to consider this matter, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 97.

May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the President of the General Assembly, wishes to reopen the consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 97?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Representatives are aware that sub-item (a) of agenda item 97 was allocated to the Second Committee. However, in order for the General Assembly to consider the sub-item and to take note of the letter by the Chairman of the Second Committee, may I

98-85177 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

take it that the General Assembly wishes to consider sub-item (a) of agenda item 97 directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Assembly will consider the sub-item just reopened at a future meeting of the Assembly.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 17 (e), 17 (g), 113 to 116, 118, 119, 123 and 159, 125, 136, 141, 142 (a), 143 and 153. I request the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee to introduce the reports of the Fifth Committee in one intervention.

Mr. Moktefi (Algeria), Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee (*interpretation from Arabic*): I have the honour today to present the reports of the Fifth Committee on the deliberations of its first resumed fifty-second session. The Fifth Committee held its first resumed fifty-second session for a period of three weeks, from 9 to 27 March 1998. The Committee held 12 plenary meetings, and negotiations were carried out through numerous informal consultations.

The following is a brief report on the result of the work of the Fifth Committee at this first resumed fifty-second session.

Regarding agenda item 17, entitled "Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments", in particular sub-item (e), "Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/674/Add.1. In paragraph 4 of that report, the Fifth Committee, by acclamation, recommends to the General Assembly the nomination of Mr. Kevin Haugh of Ireland as a member of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal for a term of office beginning on the date approved by the General Assembly ending on 31 December 1998.

With regard to sub-item 17 (g), "Appointment of members and alternate members of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/676/Add.1. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Committee recommended, by acclamation, to the General Assembly the appointment of Mr. Nester Odaga-Jalomayo of Uganda as a member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee for a term of office beginning on the date approved by the General Assembly and ending on 31 December 2000.

Concerning agenda item 113, entitled "Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/732/Add.1. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, that was adopted by the Committee without a vote as draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.28.

Regarding agenda item 114, entitled "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", the report of the Committee is contained in document A/52/746/Add.1. Under this item, the Committee took action on two questions: the proposed United Nations Code of Conduct, which was also considered under items 153, "Human resources management" and 157, "United Nations reform: measures and proposals", and the question of procurement reform. In connection with the proposed United Nations Code of Conduct, the Committee decided to consider that question at a later date during its resumed fifty-second session, following the comments and observations of the International Civil Service Commission. On the question of procurement reform and outsourcing, in paragraph 9 of its report the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution adopted by the Committee as draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.31. Both the oral draft decision and the draft resolution were adopted by the Committee without a vote.

With regard to agenda item 115, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/743/Add.1. In paragraph 4, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft decision that was adopted by the Committee without a vote as draft decision A/C.5/52/L.33.

Concerning agenda item 116, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/744/Add.2. In paragraph 15 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution regarding the Integrated Management Information System project, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote as draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.32. In paragraph 16 of the same report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of four draft decisions: "Interim

study of the question of honoraria payable to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations"; "Reduction and refocusing of non-programme costs", adopted by the Committee as draft decision A/C.5/52/L.24; "Office accommodation at the Palais Wilson", adopted by the Committee as draft decision A/C.5/52/L.23/Rev.1; and "United Nations International Partnership Trust Fund". The draft resolution and the four draft decisions were adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Regarding agenda item 118, entitled "Joint Inspection Unit", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/842. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly defer consideration of this agenda item to the second part of its fifty-second session. This oral draft decision was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Concerning agenda item 119, entitled "Pattern of conferences", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/734/Add.1. In paragraph 20 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of four draft decisions. The Committee adopted draft decision A/C.5/52/L.26, entitled "Implementation of General Assembly resolution 52/214 A, paragraphs 5 and 6" by a vote of 54 to 25 with 2 abstentions. The other draft decisions, "Upgrading of conference rooms and interpretation booths", "Documentation related to the Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names" and "Implementation of General Assembly resolution 52/214 B, paragraphs 24 and 25", were adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Regarding agenda items 123 and 159, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission" and "Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola" respectively, the report of the Committee is contained in document A/52/547/Add.1. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution that was adopted by the Committee without a vote as draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.29.

With regard to agenda item 125, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/843. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution that was adopted by the Committee without a vote as draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.30.

Concerning agenda item 136, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/844. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution that was adopted by the Committee without a vote as draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.25.

With regard to agenda item 141, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/845. In paragraph 5 of that report, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly take note of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions contained in document A/52/818. This oral draft decision was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Concerning agenda item 142 (a), entitled "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations: Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/453/Add.2. In paragraph 9 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution that was adopted by the Committee without a vote as draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.27.

With regard to agenda item 143, entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/846. In paragraph 5 of that report, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly defer consideration of this item to the second part of its resumed fifty-second session. This oral draft decision was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

Finally, concerning agenda item 153, entitled "Human resources management", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/52/739/Add.1. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of two draft decisions, one on the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the use of consultants and the other on the respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations. Both draft decisions were adopted by the Committee without a vote.

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee that are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee, unless the Secretariat is notified otherwise in advance.

Agenda item 17 *(continued)*

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(e) Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part II) (A/52/674/Rev.1/Add.1)

The Acting President: In paragraph 4 of the report contained in document A/52/674/Rev.1/Add.1, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following person as a member of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal for a term of office beginning on 31 March 1998 and ending on 31 December 1998: Mr. Kevin Haugh.

May I consider that the Assembly appoints this person?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (e) of agenda item 17?

It was so decided.

(g) Appointment of members and alternate members of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part II) (A/52/676/Add.1)

The Acting President: In paragraph 6 of the report contained in document A/52/676/Add.1, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following person as a member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee for a term of office beginning on 31 March 1998 and ending on 31 December 2000: Mr. Nester Odaga-Jalomayo.

May I take it that the General Assembly appoints this person?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee also decided to postpone to a later meeting the remaining appointment from the Group of Asian States.

We have concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 17.

Agenda item 113 *(continued)*

Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part II) (A/52/732/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of part II of its report (A/52/732/Add.1).

The draft resolution was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 52/212 B).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 113.

Agenda item 114 (*continued*)

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part II) (A/52/746/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 9 of Part II of its report (A/52/746/Add.1) and the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 10 of the same report.

We turn first to the draft resolution, entitled "Procurement reform and outsourcing", which was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 52/226 A and B)

The Acting President: We turn now to the draft decision, entitled "Proposed United Nations Code of Conduct", which the Fifth Committee adopted without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the United Kingdom, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Thorne (United Kingdom): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union on the issue of procurement reform. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus align themselves with this statement.

We would first like to take this opportunity to thank the coordinator of this item in the Fifth Committee, Mr. Miles Armitage, for his professionalism in bringing together consensus on such an important issue.

The European Union attaches the greatest importance to the issue of procurement reform, which is the subject of the resolution we have just adopted in document A/52/746/Add.1. We made the strength of our views clear during our introductory statement on this issue when the debate was resumed in the Fifth Committee three weeks ago.

That this debate will once again have to be resumed at our next session is a cause of considerable disappointment and, indeed, some disquiet. This is an area where the United Nations is exposed to commercial society. Its performance in recent years has left much to be desired. Repeated calls by the Member States for fundamental reform have led to little or no significant movement. That we achieved consensus on this resolution with relative ease demonstrates our common conviction of that unfortunate situation. Delegations were unanimous on many important issues, not least in their call for the early implementation of revised financial regulations and the long-awaited rules governing procurement procedures. We have asked for these to be submitted in good time for the next resumed session of the Fifth Committee, which will begin on 11 May.

We also ask the Secretary-General to examine and report on three other key areas, which I will enumerate briefly as follows: first, ways in which developing countries and countries with economies in transition might gain a larger share of United Nations procurement; secondly, ways in which those who are fully paid up with their contributions to the United Nations might be given some measure of priority in the conclusion of procurement contracts — we are particularly interested in the experience of the World Bank in this context; and, thirdly, ways in which the structure of the Procurement Division might be better adapted to meet the needs of the Organization.

For the first two of these issues, we have asked for reports to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. The European Union believes that these reports should be made available no later than the autumn of 1998.

On the third point, the issue of the structure and staffing of the Procurement Division, there was some

disagreement between Member States. The European Union has consistently supported the Secretary-General's own view that he requires a highly qualified officer at the level of D-2, with experience of top-level procurement, to run United Nations operations. We continue to believe that such an experienced pair of hands is necessary to deal with these important issues where the United Nations must interact with top international commercial competition.

We were pleased that Mr. Connor, the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, found the time to come and introduce this issue to the Fifth Committee. We were also happy to welcome Mr. Niwa, the responsible Acting Assistant Secretary-General, to some of our informal consultations on these important matters. We trust we can rely on their personal interest in an area which will continue to attract attention.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 114.

Agenda item 115 (*continued*)

Programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part II) (A/52/743/Add.1)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 4 of part II of its report (A/52/743/Add.1). The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 115.

Agenda item 116 (*continued*)

Programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part III) (A/52/744/Add.2)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 15 of part III of its report (A/52/744/Add.2), and on the four draft decisions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 16 of the same report.

The draft resolution is entitled "Integrated Management Information System". The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 52/227).

The Acting President: Draft decision I, entitled "Interim study of the question of honoraria payable to members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations", was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly too wishes to adopt the draft decision?

Draft decision I was adopted.

The Acting President: Draft decision II is entitled "Reduction and refocusing of non-programme costs". It was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes also to adopt the draft decision?

Draft decision II was adopted.

The Acting President: Draft decision III, entitled "Office accommodation at the Palais Wilson", was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft decision III?

Draft decision III was adopted.

The Acting President: Draft decision IV, entitled "United Nations International Partnership Trust Fund", was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes also to adopt the draft decision?

Draft decision IV was adopted.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 116.

Agenda item 118

Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/52/842)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote; may I consider that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 118.

Agenda item 119 (*continued*)

Pattern of conferences

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part II) (A/52/734/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on the four draft decisions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 20 of part II of its report (A/52/734/Add.1).

We turn first to draft decision I, entitled "Implementation of General Assembly resolution 52/214 A, paragraphs 5 and 6".

I call on the representative of Japan on a point of order.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): Through you, Sir, I request clarification from the Secretariat as to the programme budget implications of draft decision I.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Jin Yongjian (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services): I should like to inform members that, should the General Assembly adopt draft decision I, United Nations official holidays would be set at 10 rather than nine days. The Secretary-General would ensure the implementation of this draft decision and make any adjustments required. There would be no programme budget implications arising as a result of its adoption.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Indonesia on a point of order.

Mr. Atiyanto (Indonesia): We have listened to the statements by the representative of Japan and by the representative of the Secretariat. In that regard, the Group of 77 and China would like to place on record that we are not convinced of the need for the Secretariat to have made a statement on the financial implications of the draft decision on which we are about to take action. Further, we do not see the need to reopen the debate at this moment, since the Fifth Committee, as the competent committee with regard to administrative and budgetary matters, has already taken action on the issue of United Nations official holidays. As the President has recalled, and as all Member States have agreed, we will be applying rule 66 of the rules of the procedure of the General Assembly.

Having said that, my delegation, once again on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, would sincerely appeal to members not to insist on reopening the debate on this issue. Furthermore, we would once again sincerely appeal to all concerned members to understand the position of the Group of 77 and China and to support the draft decision, which has been adopted by the Fifth Committee, so as to enable the General Assembly to take action on it by consensus.

My delegation would therefore like to suggest that we proceed in that manner to take action on draft decision I.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Qatar on a point of order.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar): On behalf of the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, I wish to say that we support the position just set out by the Chairman of the Group of 77. At the same time, I think it is time for us to get beyond what happened in the Fifth Committee. None of us should reopen this issue; in a kind and friendly way, I urge all members to join consensus on this issue.

The Acting President: I am informed by the Secretariat that there has been no request for a vote on draft decision I. May I therefore take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision?

Draft decision I was adopted.

The Acting President: Draft decision II is entitled "Upgrading of conference rooms and interpretation booths". The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: Draft decision III is entitled "Documentation related to the Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names". The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We turn next to draft decision IV, entitled "Implementation of General Assembly resolution 52/214 B, paragraphs 24 and 25". The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to those speakers who wish to explain their positions on the draft decisions just adopted.

Mr. Bista (Nepal): My delegation joined the consensus in favour of draft decision I, entitled "Implementation of General Assembly resolution 52/214 A, paragraphs 5 and 6", in the belief that it seeks, basically and more than anything else, to promote the universal character of the United Nations.

One of the principal objectives of the Organization is to promote universal respect for the equal rights of peoples, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion — an objective to be reflected also in our official holidays. It is the view of my delegation that in the selection of official holidays not only should a balance be struck between international and local custom and the optimal use of the resources of the Organization, but due regard should also be paid to reflecting the main forms of civilization of the world. The Secretary-General may therefore be well advised to look into the matter more deeply and to report to the General Assembly at an appropriate time so that our reformed Organization does not have to make ad hoc decisions in this regard in future.

Mr. Atiyanto (Indonesia): The Group of 77 and China welcome draft decision I on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 52/214 A, paragraphs 5 and 6, which has just been adopted by the General Assembly by consensus, and which decides that the United Nations official holidays shall be set at 10 days in order to observe the two holidays of Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha at United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations duty stations.

The support given by the Group of 77 and China is indeed a true reflection of genuine solidarity among its members, which despite their multicultural make-up, can agree to stand in unity and work to preserve the international character of the United Nations. The Group of 77 and China believe that the adoption of that decision is of particular significance in that it recognizes the extensive diversity of the Members of the United Nations.

Finally, I should like to express the appreciation of the Group of 77 and China to those who worked in support of the decision and also to request at this time that the Secretary-General work to fully implement the decision in its letter and spirit so that we may avoid further debate on the subject in the future.

Mr. Thorne (United Kingdom): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union on the issue of United Nations holidays and draft decision I, which we have just adopted. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — as well as the European Free-Trade Area countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Liechtenstein, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union very much regretted that in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly some delegations insisted upon reopening the very carefully balanced resolution 52/214, which we had adopted only three months earlier. Last week the European Union was obliged to vote against a text which changed the carefully balanced agreement therein.

It is always regrettable when the Fifth Committee resorts to voting. In order not to repeat that procedure, the European Union has acquiesced in consensus on this occasion. I would, however, recall that the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, Ms. Salim, informed the Fifth Committee on 26 March

that the Secretary-General continued to believe that he had fully complied with the provisions of resolution 52/214.

This confirmed our own understanding of the position. While it is for the General Assembly to decide upon the number of official holidays to be accorded, it is for the Secretary-General, in consultation with the staff, to decide upon their allocation. To our knowledge, the General Assembly has never in the past instructed the Secretary-General in this way to allocate official holidays in any specific fashion. In our view, it is wrong for it to do so now. We therefore deeply regret the action we have taken, first in the Fifth Committee and now here today, which impinges directly upon the authority of the Secretary-General and contravenes the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The United Nations is, like the European Union itself, an Organization of Member States which spans such a broad range of traditions that, in order to respect all, it must not privilege any. For this reason we attach the greatest importance to the principles of equality enshrined in the Charter. That is why we worked so hard to support those who sought to explore all possible means to avoid this outcome.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): I take the floor today to address an issue of concern to the United States, but one which we do not believe needed to come to this pass. The issue of what holidays should be officially celebrated at United Nations Headquarters and its duty stations has become one of the most sensitive issues which the General Assembly has considered at this session.

We are deeply concerned that the decision increases the number of officially observed holidays. While we trust the assurances from the Secretariat that increasing the number of holidays will not have financial and budgetary implications, our concerns remain straightforward: we should not send a contradictory signal to the world that, at a time when reform of this Organization should be paramount, we would increase the number of officially recognized holidays in which the staff has additional time off.

The United Nations needs to be made more efficient and cost-effective; increasing the number of officially observed holidays does not work towards the goal of United Nations reform. The perception alone of such a move is contrary to reform.

We are also concerned that the decision undermines the Secretary-General's prerogative as chief administrative officer of the Organization, to establish the holidays observed at the different duty stations, on the basis of the customs and practices of the various host countries. We note that the United Nations currently recognizes over 50 holidays, which are celebrated as appropriate at the various United Nations headquarters and duty stations.

Finally — and this is perhaps the most sensitive aspect — we remain deeply concerned that the current decision to make mandatory the observance of two religious holidays at all United Nations duty stations is not in conformity with the secular nature of the United Nations; nor does it promote equity among the very diverse religions and cultures of the Member States of the Organization, as reflected in the spirit and intent of the Charter.

During discussions in the Fifth Committee, the United States expressed all these concerns and sought to amend the proposed decision in order to find a reasonable compromise. Unfortunately, our efforts did not prevail. Nonetheless, we reluctantly join consensus at this time on the proposed decision.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): Having joined in the adoption of draft decision I, I should like to make a brief statement to explain my delegation's position.

Earlier on, my delegation had to vote against the draft decision (A/C.5/52/L.26) in the Fifth Committee because the matter was prematurely put to the vote before every effort to achieve consensus had been exhausted. That is a well-established tradition in that Committee. Also, the draft decision appears to depart from the understanding of Member States at the time when the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/214 A a few months ago during the current session of the General Assembly.

My delegation believes that official holidays at each Secretariat duty station should be more appropriately designated within the purview of the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the Organization rather than instructed by a decision of the General Assembly. Therefore, my delegation welcomes the most recent efforts made, which have led to the plenary taking action today without a vote. We are pleased with the statement made today by Under-Secretary-General Jin on behalf of the Secretariat that through the Secretary-General's

administrative adjustment, the present decision will not entail programme budget implications.

Based on this clarification, my delegation takes that decision to be consistent with the understanding of Member States reached at the time of the adoption of resolution 52/214 A. It is for this reason that my delegation has decided to join the consensus adoption of the present decision in a spirit of cooperation and compromise.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar): On behalf of the member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), I take this opportunity to extend my thanks to all. To me, the adoption of the draft decision designating Ed Al-Fitr and Ed Al-Adha as United Nations holidays represents a new epoch of equality within this, our United Nations. Our member States are very active in the work of the United Nations. A number of our citizens are civil servants of this Organization, and it is about time that our rights and theirs are recognized. We do not believe that this is a regional Organization, nor do we believe that secularism or financial implications had anything to do with any position taken by any country. We think there is something other than that. But this is all behind us now, and again I extend my thanks to all.

Mr. Hanson (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation is pleased to associate itself with the consensus that has emerged today on this issue. We are pleased mainly because a vote was avoided and we have returned to the procedure that is most suited to this kind of decision.

(spoke in English)

We regretted that this matter was forced to a vote in the Fifth Committee, and we are glad that it has been avoided today.

My delegation has supported this decision, principally on the basis of its own national practice. To have 10 days of official holidays generally conforms to Canadian practice, and is in fact slightly less generous than Canadian practice. My delegation finds it necessary to recall, however, that the United Nations is not a sectarian Organization. It does not observe the holy days of any religion in any religious sense. Instead, its legislative bodies decide not to meet from time to time, in deference to the needs and religious devotions of Member States and their representatives, and at each duty station the Secretariat does not work on a set number of days which are decided by the Assembly.

My delegation continues to believe that the selection of staff holidays at each duty station must continue to be set by the Secretary-General in consultation with the staff, in accordance with the Charter and the staff rules. The decision which we have adopted today does not diminish the authority of the Secretary-General. We therefore welcome the statement made here today by the representative of the Secretary-General, in whom we continue to have complete confidence.

Mr. Armitage (Australia): My delegation believes strongly in the importance of the principle of consensus decision-making, particularly in relation to financial and administrative issues in the United Nations. We accept that we will not always be fully comfortable with the compromises this approach inevitably requires, but we take the view that our long-term interests and the interests of the Organization are best served by the consensus approach.

We have joined consensus on this occasion in adopting draft decision I, but with reservations as to the way it has been achieved and in particular the fact that it is underpinned by a vote in the Fifth Committee. Voting on such an issue was, in our view, an extremely disappointing development which we hope will remain an exception to usual practice.

My delegation attaches considerable importance to, and will argue strongly for, the right of all Members to observe their religious, cultural or political traditions. However, that was not at issue in the present case. The departure from the use of local practice as the primary criterion for designating official holidays raises concerns, both as a possible precedent and in light of the secular nature of the Organization. In our view, the designation of official holidays in the United Nations is the responsibility of the Secretary-General, in consultation with staff, taking into account local practice at each duty station.

We are concerned also about the implications of this decision for the authority of the Secretary-General as the chief administrative officer and for the integrity of the staff-management relationship. We are pleased with the Secretariat's statement here today.

The Acting President: We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 119.

Agenda items 123 and 159 *(continued)*

Financing of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission

Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part II) (A/52/547/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of part II of its report (A/52/547/Add.1).

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote.

May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 52/8 B).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda items 123 and 159.

Agenda item 125

Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/52/843)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/52/843).

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote.

May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 52/228).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 125.

Agenda item 136

Financing of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/52/844)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/52/844).

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote.

May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 52/229).

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 136.

Agenda item 141

Financing of the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/52/845)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 5 of its report (A/52/845).

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote.

May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 141.

Agenda item 142 *(continued)*

Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

(a) Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part III) (A/52/453/Add.2)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 9 of part III of its report (A/52/453/Add.2) and on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 10 of the same document.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution, entitled "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations", without a vote.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 52/230).

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision, entitled "Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 49/249 and 50/224", without a vote.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 142.

Agenda item 143

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/52/846)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 5 of its report (A/52/846).

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote.

May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 143.

Agenda item 153 *(continued)*

Human resources management

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part II) (A/52/739/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the two draft decisions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of part II of its report (A/52/739/Add.1).

The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision I, entitled "Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the use of consultants", without a vote.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Fifth Committee adopted draft decision II, entitled "Report submitted by the Secretary-General on behalf of and with the approval of the members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations", without a vote.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 153.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.